

Reichskanzler Adolf Hitler's Speech

September 1, 1939 before the Reichstag in Berlin



Deputies, Men of the German Reichstag!

We are all suffering for months in agony over a situation that, partially, the contract, actually diktat, of Versailles has brought upon us. This is a calamity that in its depravity and degeneracy has now become unbearable. Danzig was a German city and is a German city! The Corridor was German and is German! All these regions owe their cultural development exclusively to the German Volk. Without the German Volk, these eastern regions would still be ruled by severe barbarism. Danzig was torn from us [by Poland]. The Corridor along with other German territories in the East was annexed by Poland! The German minorities living there are abused in harrowing ways. Already in 1919/1920 over one million ethnic Germans were driven off their land by the Poles.

As always, I also tried here with peaceful revision proposals to bring about a change in this unbearable situation. It is a lie, when they claim in other parts of the world, that we proceeded only with pressure. Fifteen years before National Socialism's rise to leadership, there were opportunities to bring about these revisions by most peaceful understanding. Nothing was done. In every single case, I initiated the proposals, not once but frequently, to revise these intolerable conditions.

As you know, all my proposals were rejected. I do not have to list every single one of them: my proposals on the limitation of arms, and if necessary, even for the complete elimination of weaponry; my proposals for limited warfare; for the abolition of methods employed in modern warfare that, in my eyes, are hardly reconcilable with international law. You know of my proposals regarding the necessity to restore German sovereignty over German Reich territory. You know of the endless attempts I made for a peaceful resolution and coming to some understanding regarding the Austrian situation, and later over the issues of the Sudetenland, Bohemia, and Moravia. It was all futile. **It is an impossible situation, to demand that an unworkable condition be removed with peaceful revisions and then to refuse these peaceful revisions consistently!**

It is also an impossible standpoint to say that someone in this position, who makes a move for modifications from his end, is breaking a law. Because the Diktat of Versailles is not a law for us Germans! It was forced on us! It is not sensible to coerce a signature whilst pointing a gun with the threat: 'Sign, or Millions of your people will be starved to death [1] by us,' and then ceremoniously proclaim this document official law!

I also attempted in the case of Danzig, the Corridor, and so on, to solve these deteriorating conditions by peaceful proposals and discussions. **That these problems had to be resolved was obvious!** That the Western States were possibly unconcerned with the time table is understandable. **Yet, this time table is not indifferent to us,** and most of all, it was not and could not be indifferent to the victims, who suffered the most.

In my discussions with the Polish statesmen, I presented those thoughts-the ones you already learned of in my last speech before the Reichstag-and talked them through. No man could have said or insisted that this was an improper action or even that undue pressure was applied. I did, however, use the opportunity to finally formulate the German suggestions. And I must repeat here once again, that nothing more loyal or modest exists than these proposals then brought forward by me. And I want to say this to the world: **Only by myself was I even in a position to make such proposals, because I know very well that in doing so I brought myself into opposition to millions of Germans.**

These proposals have been refused. But not only that, they were answered

1. by mobilization, and
2. with increased terror,

and with an intensified force on the ethnic Germans in those regions. Further, a deliberate strangling assault took place in the free city of Danzig commercially and politically with customs duty maneuvers. Then finally, in the last few weeks, exploits in military and traffic logistics took hold. Poland has unleashed a battle against the free city of Danzig! It was further not willing to solve the Corridor question in the least costly way that would have rendered justice to the interests of both parties. And ultimately it has not been concerned with upholding its responsibilities toward its ethnic minorities.

And here I must point something out: **Germany has fulfilled its obligations! The minorities living within the Reich are not persecuted. There is not one Frenchman who can stand up and proclaim that the 50,000 to 100,000 French living in the Saar territory are being oppressed, tortured, or robbed of their rights. None can say that!**

I have calmly observed this situation for four months now; however, not without repeated warnings. And I have intensified these warnings lately. Already more than three weeks ago, I had informed the Polish Ambassador that if Poland should make further ultimatum threats to Danzig, if it should implement further repression measures against the Germans there, or if Poland should attempt to destroy Danzig economically by employing customs politics, **then Germany could simply no longer be expected to stand by without taking action.** And I left no doubt that in this context one should not confuse the Germany of today with the Germany of the past.

There were attempts made to excuse their actions against the Germans by claiming that these come in response to provocations. I do not know what type of "provocations" those women and children had allegedly perpetrated who were abused and abducted. Nor can I imagine what provocations had been perpetrated by those who were most sadistically and most bestially tortured and murdered. That I do not know! **Only one thing I do know, there is no great country of honor that would allow these acts to go on over time!**

I also tried one last time, even though-I must admit-in my heart I was convinced that the Polish government is not serious about attaining a real understanding, perhaps as a result of their dependence on the now unleashed wild bands of soldiers. I tried one last time to accept a mediation proposal from the British government. Brittan did not

want to negotiate themselves, but suggested and guaranteed that they would open a direct line of communication between Poland and Germany to initiate in this way talks once more.

Now I must determine the following: I accepted this proposal. I worked out fundamentals for these talks that you are familiar with. **And so I sat here for two full days with our government waiting if it would please the Polish government to send us an authorization or not.** They did not send us an endorsement last night but informed us via their ambassador that they are currently considering whether, and to what extent, they are in a position to comply with the English proposals and that they would let England know.

My Deputies! Can someone ask of the German Reich and its head of state to tolerate this? And if the German Reich and its head of state would endure this, then the German nation would deserve nothing better than to take leave of the political stage! And here they have fundamentally deceived themselves! One should not confuse my love of peace and endless forbearance with weakness, or even cowardice!

I have therefore decided last night to also inform the British Government that under these conditions I can no longer see any goodwill by the Polish Government to enter into any serious talks with us. It follows, the mediation suggestions have failed. For meanwhile, we had indeed received their **first answer to our proposals, namely a general mobilization in Poland and their second answer by renewed atrocities.** These incidents were repeated tonight. After we already had twenty-one attacks at the border in just one single night, we had fourteen incidents tonight, three of them very serious. That is why I have resolved **to speak to Poland in the same language Poland has been speaking to us for months now!**

If the statesmen in the West go about declaring that this infringes on their interests, I can only regret this declaration. But this cannot make me waver for a second in the fulfillment of my duty. What more is wanted from us? **I have solemnly assured, and I'll repeat it, that we do not demand anything from the western states and shall never demand anything of them in the future.** I have pledged that the border separating France and Germany is a final one. Time and time again I have offered England friendship, and if necessary the closest cooperation. But love cannot be offered only from one side. It must meet with reciprocation by the other.

Germany has no interests in the West. Our *Westwall* delineates the Reich's border to the West for all times. Our ambitions for the future are not any different. And nothing shall ever change the Reich's standpoint in this matter. The other European states, in part, comprehend our stance. Here I wish to thank Italy, above all, for supporting us the entire time. But you understand that I do not want to appeal to a foreign power for assistance in this battle. We will carry out our responsibilities by ourselves.

The neutral states have basically assured us of their neutrality just as we had earlier guaranteed them our neutrality. Our assurances are made in sacred earnestness. As long as other powers do not violate their neutrality, we shall likewise respect them scrupulously, for what would we wish or demand from them?

But I am happy to inform you of one development in this situation. You know that Russia and Germany are governed by two different doctrines. There was but one

question that needed to be clarified: Germany has no intention to export its doctrine. At the moment that Soviet Russia no longer thinks of exporting its doctrine to Germany, **in that same moment I no longer see any cause, not even once, for us to take up positions against each other.**

And both of us have gained complete clarity that every battle between our two nations would merely benefit others. Hence we have decided to enter into **a pact that shall preclude the use of force between us for all times!** It obligates us to seek mutual consultation in certain European questions, it shall render possible economic cooperation and, above all, it shall ensure that the strengths of these two great states are not squandered in rivalry with each other. **Every attempt of the West to change this is doomed to failure! I want to ascertain here today that this political decision denotes a tremendous turning point for the future and is a final one!**

I believe the entire German people will welcome my political stance. Because Russia and Germany fought each other in WWI only for both to become the victims in the end. **This shall not happen a second time and will not happen again!** Yesterday the Non-Aggression and Mutual Consultation Pact was ratified in Moscow and Berlin and put into effect at that moment. In Moscow this pact was as warmly received as you receive it here. I second every word of the Russian Foreign Commissioner Molotov's speech.

Our Goals

I am determined to resolve:

- 1. the question of Danzig and**
- 2. the question of the Corridor, and**
- 3. to bring about a change in German-Polish relations, so as to warrant peaceful coexistence**

I am determined to battle until either the present Polish Government is willing to bring about these conditions, or until another Polish Government shall be willing to do so. I want to remove this element of insecurity, these eternal civil-war-like conditions from the German [Polish] borders! I want to ensure that our borders in the East enjoys the same stability as our other borders.

I will take the measures necessary in an approach that does not contradict what I have pronounced to be my proposals to the world before you, my Deputies, and the Reichstag. This means I do not wish to lead this war against women and children. I have ordered my Luftwaffe to limit its attacks to military objectives. **Should, however, the enemy regard this as a license to fight with opposite measures against us, then he shall receive an answer that will beat him senseless!**

For the first time last night, Polish military invaded our territory and attacked from our soil. We have now been returning fire since 5:45 a.m! And from now on, **we shall repay bomb for bomb! He who fights with poison will be fought with poison gas!** He who distances himself from the rules of humane warfare conduct, cannot expect anything from us but retaliation. I will lead this battle so long, **regardless against whom,** until the security and the rights of the Reich are secured.

For over six years I've worked on the rearmament of the German Wehrmacht. During this time we expended over 90 billion Reichsmark for this purpose. Today it is the best equipped and far above any comparison with our military in 1914. My confidence in it is unshakeable!

As I called up this Wehrmacht, and when I now call for sacrifice from the German people, and if necessary, all sacrifices, then I have a right to do so. Because today I am as willing as I was before to make every personal sacrifice. **I ask of no German man something other than what I volunteered for and was always willing to do for four years.**

There shall be no sacrifice in Germany that I would not take upon myself immediately. My whole life belongs from now on more than ever to my Volk. **I want to be nothing else today but the first soldier of the German Reich.** I have put on the suit that once was to me the most holy and dearest. **I shall only take it off again after the victory, or I will not live to see it.**

Should something happen to me in this war, then my immediate successor shall be party comrade Göring. Should anything happen to party comrade Göring, then his successor shall be party comrade Hess. Your duty is to give these men—as your Führer—the same blind loyalty and obedience you gave me! Should anything happen to party comrade Hess, then through the offices of law I shall call upon the Senate to determine the most worthy, i.e. **the most valiant man** from its midst.

As a National Socialist and German soldier, I go into this battle with a strong heart! **My whole life was but one continuous struggle for our people, for our resurrection, for Germany.** This struggle was governed by only one principle, faith in our people! There is one word I never knew, capitulation! If anyone now believes that we are facing severe times, then I would like to ask him to bear in mind that once a Prussian king with a laughably small state faced off the greatest coalition, and three battles later, he stood in victory. For he possessed that strong, believing heart, a heart we also need in these times. I would like to assure the world around us of one thing, that a November 1918 **shall never repeat itself in German history!**

Since I myself stand ever ready to lay down my life for my Volk and Germany—anyone can take it from me—I demand the same of everyone else! Whoever believes he can set himself against this national commandment, be it direct or indirect, shall fall! Traitors have nothing to expect but death! All of us pledge ourselves here to the one ancient principle: It is totally unimportant if we live. But it is necessary that our Volk lives, that Germany lives!

I expect of you as the Reich's emissaries that you shall do your duty at whatever posts you may be assigned to! **You must carry the banner of resistance forth,** regardless of the cost. None report to me that morale is low in your district, your circuit, your troupes, or in your cabin. **The one responsible for morale is you**—the responsibility is yours! I am the one responsible for the morale of the German Volk. The responsible carrier of good morale is you. I am responsible for the morale of the German people. You are responsible for your districts and circuits. No one has the right to cast off this responsibility. We are now not asking so much about any kind of good morale but exclusively about duty. And the duty is lined up. **The sacrifice demanded of us today is no greater than the sacrifice made by countless**

earlier generations. All the men who before us had to set out on this most bitter and hardest path for Germany have not sacrificed and accomplished anything other than what we also must accomplish. Their sacrifice was not less valuable or less painful, and so it was not an easier sacrifice than ours would be, what is asked from us!

I expect from the German woman that she will be a role model and integrate herself into this great battle community with iron discipline. The German youth certainly will fulfill with a radiant heart the tasks the nation, the National Socialist state, expects and demands of it. **When we build this community, sworn together tightly, ready for anything, never willing to capitulate, then our will shall master all difficulty!**

I want to conclude with the declaration I once made as I began my struggle for leadership in the Reich. Back then I said: **When our will is so strong that no hardship can dominate it, then our will and our German 'steel' will conquer the hardship!**

Germany - Victory in Well Being! [Sieg Heil]

[1] The Allied Hunger Blockade starved the Germans anyway, killing nearly one million Germans.

Verified and translated by Teutonicaworld, March 2013

1) German audio file

2) "Reden Adolf Hitlers," Philipp Bouhler, Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Franz Eher, Nachf., Muenchen, 1940 (Fraktur)

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The Swastika: Prehistoric Nordic Race Symbol of Love and Well Being